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CROMWELL

A Speech delivered at the
Cromwell Tercentenary Celebration

1899

BY

LORD ROSEBERY

Authorised Edition

PUBLISHED BY ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

AND SOLD BY

HATCHARDS, 187 PICCADILLY, LONDON, W

1900

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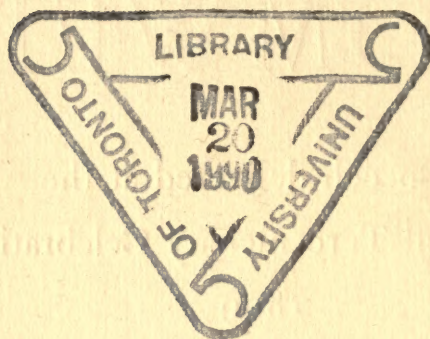
CROMWELL

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Published in self defence.

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I AM very glad to be here to-night. We are all, I imagine, glad to be here to-night, even if we are not proud to be here. For, after all, this is no great occasion for pride, as we are commemorating the erection of the first statue to Cromwell in London—a statue which ought to have been erected long ago, and which has even now met with some not unimportant difficulties.

I do not know whether you remember the history of the inception of this statue. It was promised by Mr. Herbert Gladstone, as First Commissioner of Works under the late Government; then under pressure in the House of Commons that promise was withdrawn, and immediately on that promise being withdrawn an individual who, I understand, felt that Cromwell's immortal memory should not be made a football for contending factions in the House of Commons, wrote to offer to bear the cost of the memorial. The Government of the day accepted that offer, and it was ratified by the Government now in power. Since that time a new opposition has sprung up. It

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is slender in numbers, but I do not pretend to say that it is not representative of a considerable volume of prejudice and even of passion ; but as far as it has gone it has not assumed a very serious complexion. It has indeed carried in the House of Lords, when the House of Lords was not very crowded, a resolution denouncing the present position of the statue ; and though the Government loyally stood to their pledges, they were unfortunately defeated by a majority of six to four. I for one do not complain of that opposition ; but there are two features in connexion with it to which I would call attention for a moment. The first is that it is not very logical, because in the very heart of the House of Commons—that sacred shrine of the Constitution, to which the presence, I presume, of Oliver Cromwell was supposed by the majority in the House of Lords to be deleterious—there has been placed by the present Government, not by arrangement with the late Government and not under any pressure whatever, a bust of Oliver Cromwell. I do not, therefore, quite understand that tenderness of conscience which protests against a statue in the open air and outside Parliament, but which raises no objection to a bust in the very heart and centre of Parliament itself. Secondly, I would urge this—that if this opposition were to be raised, it would have been more graceful and fair had it been urged some four years ago. A statue was promised, and the sculptor was commissioned somewhere about June, 1895, for I remember it preceded almost immediately the fall of the late Government—not that I associate the two facts in the slightest degree. Some four years ago

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the commission was given, and it is not till the pedestal has been actually erected, and the statue itself is rumbling on its way to occupy that pedestal, that the opposition lifts up its voice, and in the House of Lords even goes to a division. I think that that was, to speak in the vernacular, hardly playing the game, and I hope that we shall hear no more on this subject. But there is an evil fate which attends statues of Cromwell, and Manchester, I believe, had the honourable distinction of being the only city that possessed one. Scotland was prepared to erect a statue to Oliver, although he had inflicted a considerable defeat upon her forces; yet so great was her gratitude for the good government that came from this unwelcome source that a statue was ordered to be erected to Cromwell on the site now occupied by a statue of his successor, Charles II. Unfortunately, the statue was not more than rough-hewn at the time of the Protector's death, and therefore it lay an almost shapeless mass, a figure in a shroud, at Leith, until it was put up in some obscurer part of Edinburgh, and ultimately went no man knows whither. We, at any rate, are more fortunate, for we have a statue which, so far as I can judge from seeing it in the Academy, is worthy of the subject and worthy of the genius of the sculptor—I am glad that the sculptor is here to listen to your applause.

Sir, you have insinuated that I am going to give to-night an exhaustive description of Oliver Cromwell. That is exactly what I shall not attempt to do; for to do so in a speech would be inevitably to fall short of my object, and also altogether to mistake the character of a speech. Were I going to write you an essay it might be

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possible to make some such attempt ; but the character of a speech must be of necessity comparatively shallow, and must not attempt more than it well can achieve. Moreover, so as to make my survey in its very inception imperfect, there are two great acts in the Protector's career on which I propose to offer none but the very fewest and sparsest observations. The first is his policy towards Ireland. With regard to that I am bound to say that it admits of explanation, but it hardly admits of excuse. I am one of those who feel that were I an Irishman I, at any rate, should not be a contributor to a statue to Oliver Cromwell. I am not sure that even as a Scotsman I may not have to bear some little censure for being present on this occasion. But to our Irish friends I may say that as we do not interfere with the statues which they choose to put up in Dublin, they might refrain from interfering with the statues which we choose to put up in London. It is true that the policy of Cromwell towards Ireland was ruthless and cruel in the extreme, but two things should be remembered, not by way of palliation, but of explanation. In the first place there was great provocation ; and in the second place the Puritans, of whom he was the leader, were deeply imbued, for reasons which it would take too long to explain, with the lessons of the Old Testament. They believed that they were the chosen people of God and had the right to deal with their enemies as the Israelites dealt with the Amalekites. The Amalekites it should be noted were not the Irish, but the Roman Catholics. It is indeed stated on high authority that the majority of the garrison of Drogheda, which was put to the sword, consisted of English people. However that may be,

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this Old Testament view is the explanation, but not the palliation, of Cromwell's conduct towards Ireland.

Nor will I say anything about the execution of Charles I. That was an act which I think was barely justified by the circumstances. But it was an act as to which one or two facts are generally forgotten, if they were ever known, by the critics of the memory of Cromwell. The first is that it was not a willing act on the part of Cromwell. He endeavoured as far as he could to work with the king; and it was not until he found that the king would accept no position short of the absolute ideal of kingship which he had formed for himself that Cromwell was forced to desist from the attempt. You must remember also that he had found from painful experience that Charles held no measure with his opponents; that he was in no respect to be trusted; and you must also recollect what is now better known—that it is not possible for a feudal monarch to be his own constitutional successor. The two things cannot combine in one man. That was made clear nearly a century and a half later in the case of Louis XVI. of France, who was willing to be a constitutional sovereign, to be his own constitutional successor, which Charles I. was not. But it was not possible. If then you were to have a constitutional sovereign, you were bound in one way or another to get rid of Charles I.; though it seems to me that as a stroke of policy means much more gentle might have been adopted, which would have prevented the act being, as in essence it was, not merely a crime, if crime you call it, but a political blunder as well. There is only one further remark that I will make on this subject. Happy is the dynasty which can permit

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without offence or without fear the memory of a regicide to be honoured in its capital. Happy the sovereign and happy the dynasty that, secure in their constitutional guarantees and in the world-wide love of their subjects, can allow such a ceremonial as this to take place without a shadow of annoyance or distrust.

What manner of man was this Cromwell whom we seek to honour to-night? Probably we shall get as many answers as there are people in this hall. Every one has his own theory of Cromwell, and they are apt to be jarring theories. There is, of course, the popular but perhaps illiterate view which you sometimes hear expressed, that he was 'a damned psalm-singing old humbug, who cut off the head of his king.' To a considerable number of those who talk about Cromwell, the knowledge of him is limited to that simple assertion. I do not know whether that is the opinion of the majority of the House of Lords. At any rate let me quote two or three testimonies on the other side. Lord Macaulay said of him that he was 'the greatest prince that ever ruled England.' The greatest living authority on that period—Samuel Rawson Gardiner, who by no means is a favourable critic of all the policy of Cromwell, sums him up in these words:—'It is time for us to regard him as he really was, with all his physical and moral audacity, with all his tenderness and spiritual yearnings—in the world of action what Shakespeare was in the world of thought; the greatest because the most typical Englishman of all time.' But there is one testimony which I regard as more valuable because—I cannot say it is more unbiassed—it is more naturally biassed in the other direction: it is the

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testimony of Southey, the great Tory man of letters in his day—not Conservative, remember, but the Tory historian of his day. He speaks of Cromwell thus—as ‘Lord of these three kingdoms and indisputably the most powerful potentate in Europe, and certainly the greatest man of an age in which the race of great men was not extinct in any country, no man was so worthy of the station which he filled.’ I balance these testimonies against the majority in the House of Lords. But if I am asked on what grounds I personally admire him, I could not give them all to-night; but I should say that in the first place he was a great soldier; that in the second place he was a great ruler; and that in the third place he was a great raiser and maintainer of British influence and power abroad.

Let me take him as a soldier. I am not, of course, competent to give any technical opinion upon his merits as a soldier; but I believe that the experts of the day do now pronounce the opinion that Cromwell was one of the great soldiers of his day and of all days. But, at any rate, whether we can judge of him as a strategist or not, we laymen who are not soldiers can at any rate, understand certain broad features of Cromwell’s military career which appeal to us all. In the first place, it was so marvellously short. It was begun at so late a period of life. I think he was forty-three when he entered the Army, and fifty-two when he finally sheathed his sword. His military career lasted only nine years. That seems to me to be a most remarkable feature. I think that no man ever entered the Army so late who rose to so great a position, except, perhaps, that still more singular and startling

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instance, considering the time in which he lived, of Lord Lynedoch, who entered the Army at about forty-six and who lived to be a Field Marshal. Another peculiarity about Cromwell was that he won every battle that he fought. And we also know the fervour of enthusiasm which he managed to inspire in his soldiers; the coolness and judgment with which, even on the battlefield, he managed to guide and restrain that enthusiasm; the extraordinary instinct by which he was able to detect the weakest point of the enemy's battle array and to direct his full force on that weak point. In a word, it was his eye for battle. No one who has read the account of the battles of Cromwell can doubt that he was a born soldier; that he had military capacity in its truest sense and in the highest degree.

Let me take him now as a ruler. I have deliberately not called him a statesman, because Cromwell had no opportunity of showing what were his qualities as a statesman. His reign was too short; his life was too short. He died at an age at which a man would be thought almost young for a Prime Minister in these days. But there is also this to be recollected of him—he was always ruling on behalf of a minority. It is perfectly true that he was fighting the battle of freedom. It is perfectly true that he was fighting the battle of toleration. But I think it is equally and indisputably true that the majority of the nation were not favourable to his policy, and that if he were fighting for their rights he had to fight against their instincts and prejudices. That I believe to be the explanation of his parliamentary difficulties—the Parliaments that he had to dissolve, the Parliaments that he had to watch,

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the Parliaments that he had to sift, the Parliaments in which he had to guard the doors, so that no member of the Opposition could possibly gain entrance. If we consider what Cromwell's position really was—how in truth he was a destructive agent, appointed as it were to put an end to the feudal monarchy, and to be the introducer of a new state of things—and consider also that he had to do all this not resting upon the will of the people, but upon the will of the army, I think we shall feel that Cromwell achieved extraordinary results. Even in Scotland, where he was no welcome intruder, he governed the country as Scotland—and I am sorry to say that it was no great compliment—had never been governed before, and was not governed for a long time afterwards. He effected the union between Scotland and England, and he effected what was practically far more important to Scotland—freedom of trade between Scotland and England ; a measure which was regarded with so much prejudice that it was one of the causes of the opposition to him in England. These alone are great achievements in any reign, especially so short an one as Oliver's.

There is one more feature which has been already alluded to in his policy as a ruler, and on which we cannot lay too great an emphasis. He was the first ruler who really understood and practised toleration. It is quite true that it was by no means universal. For example, it did not extend, generally speaking, to Episcopalians. It is quite true that some Episcopalians were not allowed to practise their faith so freely as they might have desired ; but I believe that in that case the reasons were political and that it was the Royalist and not the Episcopalian who was forbidden

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to influence the people. But we do know that he was capable of an act of toleration almost incredible in those days, and not even in these days by any means universal. He was the first prince who reigned in England who welcomed and admitted the Jews. I am glad to see that the heads of that community, such as Lord Rothschild, Sir Samuel Montagu, and Mr. Benjamin Cohen are here to-night to show their appreciation of that act of beneficence.

It is a peculiarity of great men that they have a tendency to wreck the throne on which they sit. Take Frederick the Great : he led the life of a drill sergeant, of an estate steward, of a bureaucrat, of a minister and a general, all in one, making the details of every department of government centre in himself. He indeed absorbed everything, and nothing could be done without his sanction and knowledge. Such a man makes himself the mainspring of the machine, and when he withdraws the machine collapses and has to be constructed afresh. Take Napoleon : he differed from Frederick in that he did not find a throne, and had to construct one, but, being on it, one of his objects would appear to have been to make it impossible for any one else to occupy it. Combining the activity of a score of men with a mind embracing the largest questions and the smallest details, directing everything, making everything derive light and guidance from him, so completely did he centralise all in himself, that, had he died as Emperor, his disappearance would have caused not a vacancy, but a gulf in which the whole apparatus of government must have disappeared. And so of Cromwell, but in a different sense. He, too, has a throne resting on the support of 60,000 armed men

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that if it loses support it falls, because it is antagonistic to the nation at large. Cromwell soon sees his throne is held on a personal tenure. So fully does he realise that he could not bequeath to anyone the power on which his rule rested, that it is by no means certain that he ever thought it worth while to name a successor. He dies, and the fabric disappears. The real founder of a dynasty is one who produces not merely a throne, but institutions, and if the institutions are sound the throne remains part of the fabric. That is why so few lasting dynasties are founded ; the founder is ordinarily the only potent institution, and he is essentially mortal.

Then I take Cromwell as the raiser and maintainer of the power and Empire of England. I do not propose to-night to trace the method by which he made his name and the name of his country honoured and respected ; it would take me too long, and, indeed, it is not particularly easy to define. But there is one ground, one clear ground, upon which he fixed the attention of Europe. He was not born to the title as were his predecessors and successors, but he was essentially the Defender of the Faith. You know what he did with regard to the Waldenses, those persecuted Protestants, the massacres and horrors perpetrated upon whom remain so black a page in European history. Cromwell spoke—he did not interfere by arms, though I have seen his action on this subject cited as a precedent for religious interference by arms—he did not interfere by arms, but he wrote dispatches, and by the force of diplomacy, backed by a great army and his supreme reputation, he achieved his object, and what remained of the Waldenses were saved. When

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Europe saw that Cromwell was in earnest, Europe had no hesitation as to the course it had to adopt. Indeed it is very remarkable—it is not, as I have said, wholly explicable—the extraordinary deference, I had almost said the adoration, that Europe paid to him. Spain and France contended for his alliance. Two great Roman Catholic countries strove for the honour of alliance with the Defender of the Protestant faith. The great Roman Catholic monarch, Louis XIV., put on mourning for him. Cardinal Mazarin, a Prince of the Roman Church, earnestly, almost humbly, sought his alliance; and, as showing the position of power and honour Cromwell held, I may quote a letter from the great Condé, the greatest general on the continent of Europe at a time when the continent of Europe produced many great generals:—‘I am exceedingly delighted,’ he says, ‘with the justice which has been paid to your Highness’s merit and virtue. I consider that the people of the three kingdoms are in the height of their glory in seeing their goods and their lives intrusted at last to the management of so great a man.’ That is no Republican sentiment, that is no Protestant testimony; it is that of a great Roman Catholic French Prince. Well, I would ask, What is the secret of this extraordinary power? As I said before, you will all of you probably give one answer or another, many of them likely to conflict. There is one answer I suppose everybody here would give—that the secret of Cromwell’s strength rested in his religious faith. I discard that answer, because it would be begging the question. No, my answer is this—that he was a practical mystic, the most formidable and terrible of all combinations. A man who combines inspiration

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apparently derived—in my judgment really derived—from close communion with the supernatural and the celestial, a man who has that inspiration and adds to it the energy of a mighty man of action, such a man as that lives in communion on a Sinai of his own, and when he pleases to come down to this world below seems armed with no less than the terrors and decrees of the Almighty Himself.

Let me take him first as a man of action. I present to you the portrait of Cromwell as he has come down to us depicted by contemporary writers such as Sir Philip Warwick, and, having given you his portrait as the man of action, then we will get glimpses of him from the other side. How does he appear to us? He comes tramping down to us through the ages in his great wide boots, a countenance swollen and reddish, a voice harsh, sharp, and untunable, with a country-made suit, a hat with no band, doubtful linen with a speck of blood upon it. He tramps over England, he tramps over Scotland, he tramps over Ireland, his sword in one hand, his Bible in the other. Then he tramps back to London, from whence he puts forth that heavy foot of his into Europe, and all Europe bows before him. When he is not scattering enemies and battering castles he is scattering Parliaments and battering general assemblies. He seems to be the very spirit of destruction, an angel of vengeance permitted to reign for a season to efface what he had to efface and then to disappear. Then there came the end. The prophetic Quaker sees the 'waft of death' go out against that man, there is a terrible storm, and he lies dying in Whitehall, groaning out that his work is done, that he will not drink or sleep, that he wishes to

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‘make what haste he can to be gone,’ and the sun as it rises on his great day, the 3rd of September, the day of Dunbar and of Worcester, finds Cromwell speechless, and, as it sets, leaves him dead. That is practically the view that we get from contemporary portraits.

Yet there is another side ; for with all his vigorous characteristic personality there is something impersonal about Cromwell. Outside the battlefield he never seems a free agent, but rather the instrument of forces outside and about him. The crises of nations, like the crises of nature, have their thunderbolts, and Cromwell was one of these ; he seems to be propelled, to be ejected into the world in the agony of a great catastrophe and to disappear with it. On the field of battle he is a great captain, ready, resourceful, and overwhelming ; off the field he seems to be a creature of invisible influences, a strange mixture of a strong practical nature with a sort of unearthly fatalism, with a sort of spiritual mission. It is this combination, in my judgment, which seems to make the strength of Cromwell. This mysterious symbolism appears to have struck the Eastern Jews so much that they sent a deputation to England to inquire if he was the Messiah indeed. That is not exactly a combination that can be produced in bronze or any known metal, but Mr. Thornycroft has given us in his statue the nearest equivalent to it. He has given us Cromwell with sword in one hand and Bible in the other. Well, I suppose our critics will say there is no question whatever about the appropriateness of the sword, but there is a great deal of doubt about the genuineness of the Bible ; indeed, the whole controversy as to Cromwell really hinges on the question, Was he a hypocrite or

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not? That is why I told you the answer resting his success on his religious faith would be begging the question, and that is why I discarded it. It is a question, however, that must stand unanswered until the secrets of all hearts are revealed; for it is a secret between Cromwell and his God.

Those who hate his memory for other reasons are determined to believe that he was a hypocrite, but, at any rate, we who are here to-night do not believe that he was a hypocrite, or we should not be here. I think those who call Cromwell a hypocrite can never have read his letters to his children. Those are not State documents. Those were not meant to be published in Blue-books—it was a happy age when there were no Blue-books—they were not meant to put the Governor and Protector in a favourable light. They were the genuine outpourings of a sincere soul. Let me take a further incident of Cromwell's life not familiar perhaps to those who have called him hypocrite. The pious Quaker, George Fox, not then in the position that Quakers occupy now in this country—for they were harried, imprisoned, and persecuted—he, an outcast among men, was brought in bonds to see the great Protector. He did not beg compassion for his people or ask for any particular favour. He came to testify to the great man, to preach to the great man, and in his leathern jerkin he did preach to him. I think the account of this little interview, which I will not read at length but only summarise, is one of the most interesting and touching episodes in the whole of Cromwell's career. George Fox, when he came in, said nothing apologetic. He uttered a prayer: 'Peace be in this house.'

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Some Sovereigns might have been annoyed at this condescension from a man continually within the grasp of the law and who was still a prisoner. But Cromwell receives it with humility.

‘I exhorted him,’ says Fox, ‘to keep in the fear of God that he might be directed, and order all things under his hand to God’s glory. I spoke much to him of truth, and much discourse I had with him about religion, wherein he carried himself very moderately.’ Then Fox and Cromwell held a discussion on ‘priests, whom he (Cromwell) called ministers. . . . As I spoke he several times said it was very good, and it was truth. . . . Many more words I had with him, but people coming in I drew a little back; and, as I was turning, he caught me by the hand, and, with tears in his eyes, said, “Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but an hour a day together, we should be nearer one to the other;” adding that he wished me no more ill than he did to his own soul.’

What had Cromwell to gain by being civil to this man and by listening to what many people would have thought rodomontade? Most people would have thought it a duty to hand him back to justice; but Cromwell saw the sincerity of the man, welcomed him, released him, and took him to his heart.

Let me tell you another little story you may not have heard before—not much in itself, but curious for the directness with which it comes. It was told me by a friend of mine, a Bishop of the Established Church—by no means one of the oldest of the Bishops, because he is of my own age—and he was told it by a gentleman who had it from a doctor—that makes three people—and the doctor heard it from the Sir

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Charles Slingsby of his day, who had it from a nurse. That is but five people, and covers a long period. Sir Charles Slingsby heard it from the nurse, who as a girl was the heroine of the story. The day before Marston Moor, Cromwell arrived at Knaresborough, and while there he disappeared from among his troops. Search was made for him for two hours, but he could not be found; but this girl, who afterwards became nurse, remembered an old dis-used room at the top of the tower; it was the only possible place where Cromwell could be, and the girl, peeping through the keyhole of the locked door, saw the Protector on his knees with his Bible before him, wrestling, as he would have said, in prayer, as he had been wrestling for the two hours he had been missing. Was there anything to be gained by this? Was there any effect to be made by his locking himself in the neglected, ruined chamber, and imploring the blessing of the God of battles in the contest of the following day? I at any rate see nothing to be gained, and if those who read the story still think him a hypocrite, why then he must have become a hypocrite so consummate that hypocrisy became as much part of his being as the air he breathed.*

But I will give a more practical reason for my belief that Cromwell was not a hypocrite. Had he been, he could not have achieved such enormous success; he could not have wielded the prodigious force that he did. A religious force which is based on hypocrisy is no force at all. It may stand inspection for a moment, like a house built upon the sands, but when the storms come, when the rain

* I find that this story has already appeared in print.

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descends, and when the winds blow, under the stress of adverse circumstances, the house and the fabric disappear. I believe, then, that had Cromwell been a hypocrite he would have been found out; I believe that if he had been a hypocrite he would not have been able to maintain himself in the dazzling position which he attained; and had he been a hypocrite he could not have formed that army which he commanded, and which was indubitably the greatest army in Europe at the time of his death.

Let me take the point of the army. He early became aware of the overwhelming force which religious fervour would give to his army, but he did not utilise this conviction by making hypocrites of his army. He utilised it by selecting those men who he knew were of good repute among their neighbours; steady, earnest, God-fearing men who would be equal to sustaining the onset of the brilliant army commanded by the King and his cousin. Cromwell told his friend and kinsman, the illustrious Hampden—and I think that we have the pleasure of seeing a descendant of Hampden and the possessor of Hampden's house here to-night—he told Hampden that the men whom he was leading were no match for the chivalry of the King's army. Let me give Cromwell's account. 'I told him . . . "You must get men of a spirit; and take it not ill what I say—I know you will not—of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go; or else you will be beaten still?" I told him so; I did truly. He was a wise and worthy person; and he did think that I talked a good notion, but an impracticable one. Truly I told him I could do somewhat in it. I did so, and the result was—impute it to what you please—I

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raised such men as had the fear of God before them, as made some conscience of what they did. And from that day forward, I must say to you, they were never beaten, and wherever they were engaged against the enemy they beat continually.' With these men he won his battles and beat down the chivalry of England. Are we to believe then that these Ironsides were merely canting hypocrites, that they rode to death with a lie on their lips and a lie in their hearts? Surely not. To believe that would be to misunderstand the nature of the forces that sway mankind. Nor did the lives of these men belie them. As a contemporary chronicler says: 'The countries where they come leap for joy of them'—which I believe is not always the welcome given to an army by the peaceful inhabitants of the country they traverse—'and come in and join with them.' And so by his selection, and by influence, he welded that impregnable force, that iron band which he himself at the last could hardly sway to his will. Had they been hypocrites this could not have been; and as they could not have been hypocrites, their exemplar, their prophet, their commander could scarcely have been a hypocrite either. It is quite true that Cromwell's action not unfrequently jars with Christianity as we in this nineteenth century understand it. But, as I have said, his religion and that of the Puritans was based largely on constant, literal, daily reading of the Old Testament. The newer criticism would have found no patron in Cromwell. Indeed, I believe that its professors would have fared but ill at his hands. He himself lived with an absolutely child-like faith in the atmosphere and with the persons of the Old

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Testament. Joshua and Samuel and Elijah were as real and living beings to him as any people in history, or any of the persons by whom he was surrounded. His favourite psalm, we are told, was the 68th—the psalm that, even in the tumult of the victory of Dunbar, he shouted on the field of battle before he ordered the pursuit of the retreating army. But it always seemed to me that another psalm, the 149th, much more closely reproduces the character, the ideas, and the practice of Cromwell: ‘Let the saints be joyful in glory. . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishment upon the people; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written. Such honour have all His saints.’ It is not a comfortable or patient or long-suffering creed, it is true; but, remember, it is the creed that first convulsed and then governed England—the faith of men who carried their iron gospel into their iron lives, who could have not done what they did had they been hypocrites, and who would not have received their incomparable inspiration from a hypocrite. Sir, that is as far as I can carry this controversy to-night.

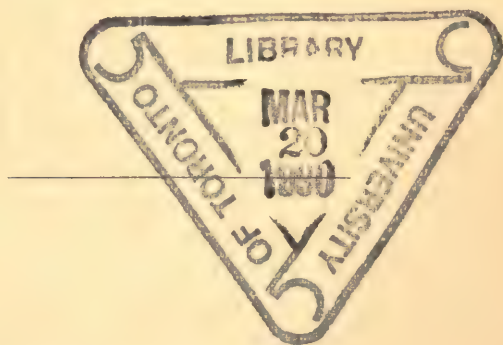
To the end of time the contest will rage as to the merits and the sincerity of Cromwell. Cowley, in a noble piece of prose, such prose as was only produced in the seventeenth century, pictures himself as returning from the funeral of the Protector. He records the pomp of the obsequies, and continues thus: ‘But yet, I know not how, the whole was so managed that, methought, it somewhat expressed the life of him for whom it was made—much noise, much tumult, much

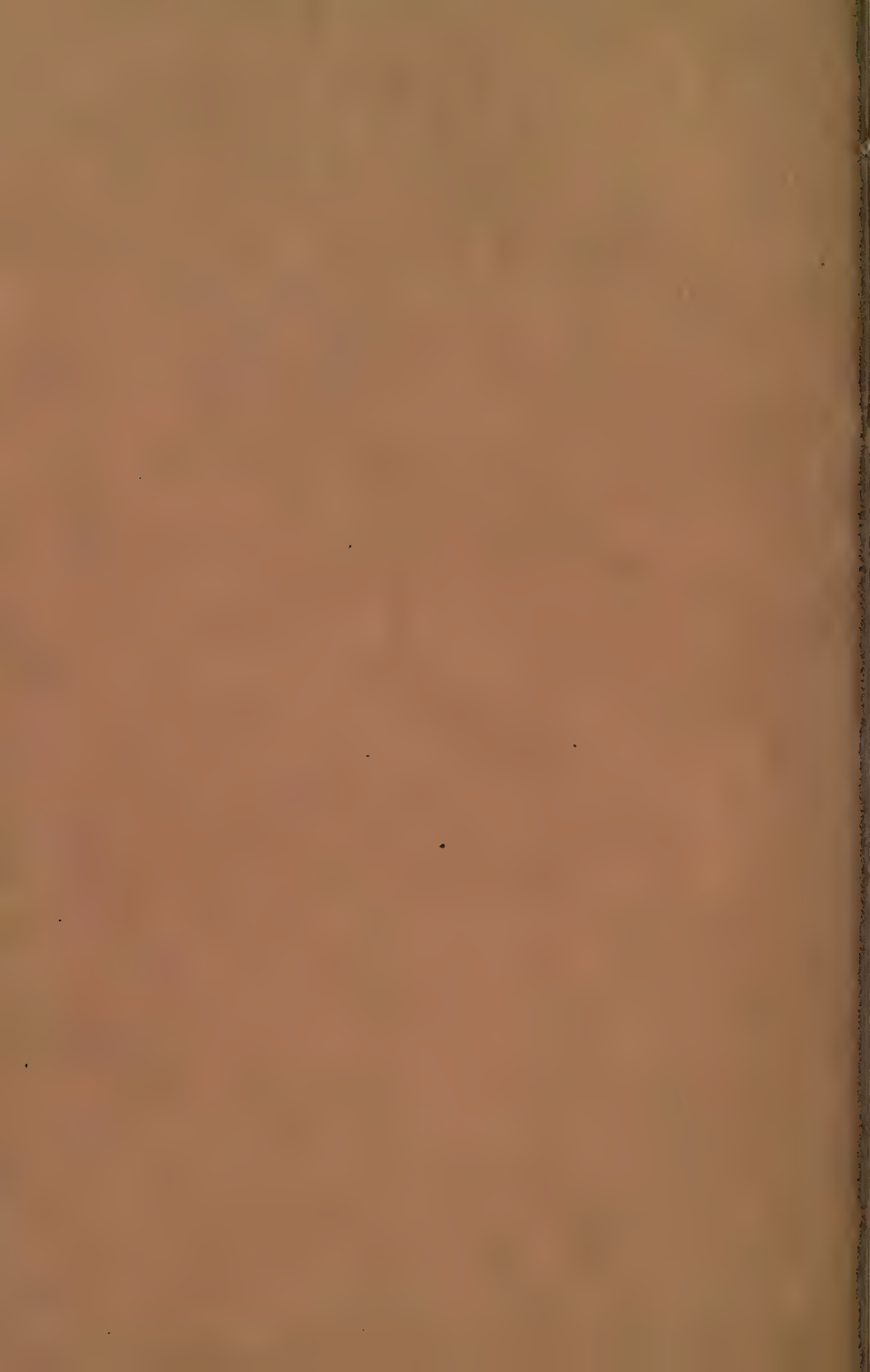
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expense, much magnificence, much vainglory, briefly a great show, and yet, after all this, but an ill sight.' Cowley was a Royalist, and he wrote when no unbiassed opinion was possible. But his words are striking enough, and I make a present of them to the opponents of the Cromwell statue. Was it indeed a splendid administration, a masculine and honest career, or, as Cowley says, an ill sight? On that point, at any rate, my mind is clear. I will go so far as to say that great and opulent and powerful as we are, so far from banishing his memory, we could find employment for a few Cromwells now. The Cromwell of the nineteenth or the Cromwell of the twentieth century would not be the Cromwell of the seventeenth century, for great men are coloured by the age in which they live. He would, at any rate, not be Cromwell in his externals. He would not decapitate; he would not rise in rebellion; he would not speak the Puritan language. But he would retain his essential qualities as a general, as a ruler, as a statesman. He would be strenuous. He would be sincere. He would not compromise with principles. His faith would be in God and in freedom, and in the influence of Great Britain as promoting, as asserting, both. In that faith he lived, by those lines he governed, imperfectly, no doubt, as mortals must be imperfect, but honestly: in that faith, by those principles, he lived, and governed, and died. Sir, I hope that we, too, as a nation are animated in our patriotism by no lower an ideal. I speak of the nation as a whole, for I know that there are some individuals to whom this theory is cant, and the worst of cant. I know it, and I am sorry for them. But, on the other hand, I

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believe that the vast majority of our people are inspired by a nobler creed ; that their Imperialism, as it is called, is not the lust of dominion or the pride of power, but rather the ideal of Oliver. If that be so he is influencing us yet, and a statue more or less matters little. So long as his tradition pervades the nation the memory of Cromwell is not likely to suffer disparagement for the want of an effigy. And, even were it otherwise, he has a surer memorial still. Every one, I think—every one, at any rate, who is worth anything—has in his heart of hearts a pantheon of his historical demigods, not even demigods, for they would then be too far and too aloof from mankind, but a shrine in which lie the sacred memories of the past, of the best and noblest of born men. In that pantheon, in many English hearts, and those not the worst—whether the effigy of Cromwell be outside or inside Parliament, or altogether invisible—will be found eternally engraved the monument and the memory of the Great Protector.







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